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ists of the seventeenth century, men like Caravaggio or Spagnoletto. This portrait was a preliminary painting for the figure of Cuenot that appears in *The Funeral at Ornans* (now in the Louvre), an immense composition of forty figures, each one a portrait. This work, together with the *Stone Breakers* (Dresden Museum) and *Peasants of Flagey Returning from the Fair* (sold at auction in New York several years ago), were the most talked-of pictures at the Salon of 1850-51, the birth-date of the realistic school of the nineteenth century.

The other is the portrait of a Madame Frood who, judging from her costume, was a woman of the Franche-Comté. The exact date of this painting is not known, but it could with certainty be placed between 1865 and 1870. In it is evident the tendency toward full light and simple effect that painting was soon to take on; it has, in fact, a resemblance to the style that Manet was evolving at the same time. The two pictures were given to the Pennsylvania Academy by the painter, Mary Cassatt, whose appreciation of the greatness of Courbet has had important results on his representation in American collections.

The *Woman with the Mirror*, *La Belle Irlandaise*, lent anonymously, is among those pictures that will be generally admired as one of the most masterly and charming of the exhibition. In this work, Courbet has been carried away by the loveliness of the sitter; he has painted her mass of copper-colored hair and her strong, sensitive hands with an evident admiration that was rare in his generally impersonal outlook. The same quality is found in *The Woman with the Parrot*, of the same year. *La Belle Irlandaise* was Whistler's companion and famous model, Jo, after whom *The White Girl* and *The Little White Girl* were painted, and who appears in so many of his paintings and etchings. She and Whistler spent the summer of 1865 at Trouville with Courbet. *The Woman with the Mirror* was painted at that time or shortly after, as it is dated 1866. Another painting of the same period is *The Isolated Rock*, which likewise shows that

Courbet, with all his brutal strength, could appreciate exquisiteness; in this case, the mother-of-pearl tints in the late afternoon sky could not be more tenderly painted. One might think that companionship with the delicate and sensitive Whistler had tempered his ruggedness, at the same time that the example of Courbet's overwhelming genius was developing and forcing the art of Whistler.

Lack of space prevents any detailed mention of the pictures; all could be commented upon and praised. The exhibition will make evident to its visitors the high place which Courbet occupies in the hierarchy of great artists—a place which our general public has been tardy to accord him. B. B.

A LOUIS XVI CYLINDER-DESK

A MAGNIFICENT example of French eighteenth-century furniture in the Louis XVI style, a cylinder-desk¹ bearing the royal arms of France, has been presented to the Museum by Jacques Seligmann of Paris, "In memory of Mr. J. P. Morgan, and as a souvenir of the help which the Americans have given to France during the war." In every way this splendid desk of mahogany and ebony, richly decorated with ormolu mounts, is a piece of capital importance. The Bourbon lilies surmounted by the royal crown, which appear in a cartouche upon the front and back of the desk, would seem to indicate that it was made for the king, that is to say, for Louis XVI, as the style of the desk is clearly that of his reign. It is a *bureau du roi* which yields to none in beauty and interest.

The desk formed part of the Murray Scott Collection, bequeathed to Lady Sackville, from whom the collection was acquired in 1914 by Jacques Seligmann. Sir Murray Scott inherited his collection from the widow of Sir Richard Wallace, whose secretary he had been. Sir Richard Wallace in turn inherited the larger part of the famous collection which is known by his name, from the fourth Marquess of Hertford. This celebrated connoisseur, in the first part of the nineteenth century,

¹Acc. No. 19.46.

formed a marvelous collection of works of art, which he housed in his Paris residence on the rue Laffitte and in the château of Bagatelle, which he purchased in 1832. After this collection passed into the possession of his half-brother, Sir Richard Wal-

The question naturally arises: was the Seligmann desk originally acquired by Sir Murray Scott, by Sir Richard Wallace, or by the Marquess of Hertford? In the absence of records, this question can not be answered with certainty, but the prob-



THE VILLAGE GIRLS (DETAIL)
BY GUSTAVE COURBET

lace, part of it was removed to London and installed in Hertford House. In 1897, seven years after her husband's death, the London collection was bequeathed to the British nation by Lady Wallace. That part of the collection which had never been moved from Paris, Lady Wallace bequeathed to Murray Scott, who in turn left it to Lady Sackville.

abilities are that this honor must be accorded to the Marquess of Hertford. It is hardly likely that any piece of French furniture of the importance of this desk, which is here published for the first time, could have been acquired in comparatively recent times without the fact being widely known among those interested. Furthermore, the desk with its elaborate metal

mounts is precisely of that exceptional quality which the Marquess of Hertford sought—and obtained, as the well-known masterpieces of French furniture in the Wallace Collection bear witness. In any case, the desk is worthy of this famous collector.

The cylinder-bureau came into favor about 1750, during the reign of Louis XV. This special form of desk is sometimes called *bureau à la Kaunitz*, after its reputed inventor, Prince Kaunitz. It holds a logical position in the evolution of the desk.

style is our recent accession, but before commenting upon its merits as a work of art, a description of the desk is in order.

The illustrations which accompany these notes give a good idea of the general appearance of the bureau, both closed and open.¹ Extremely interesting is the ingenious construction of the piece—a feature characteristic of English as well as French furniture in the late eighteenth century, when the cabinet-makers, supreme masters of their craft, delighted in contriving new conveniences. In the skilful use of all



DESK, FRENCH, PERIOD OF LOUIS XVI
FRONT, CLOSED

The long bureau-table, which sometimes had at one end of it a tier of ornamental shelves and pigeon-holes known as *serre-papiers*, presented obvious disadvantages in an age when many indiscreet things were committed to paper. The pigeon-holes and little drawers were then, as now, an invitation to disorder, and the cylinder-bureau undoubtedly had its origin in the desire to cover up the confusion in which important papers might be left, or to afford them better protection from prying eyes. The most famous example of the cylinder-desk is undoubtedly the *grand bureau secrétaire du roi Louis XV*, now exhibited in the Louvre. This piece is a superb example of the Louis XV style. Equally representative of the succeeding

available space, in the devising of secret drawers and compartments, the Museum desk is a masterpiece of its kind. Let us imagine that the desk is before us and ready to reveal its secrets to the initiated.

A small key opens the upper right-hand drawer. Here is kept a large key with a handle (shown inserted in the illustration of the front of the desk open), which unlocks the cylinder top. To insert the key, it is first necessary to press a hidden spring concealed in the ormolu mounts of the upper central panel. When this spring is pressed, the mask of a woman's head drops down revealing the keyhole. But there are further complications. When the

¹Measurements: height, 52 in.; length, 62½ in.; depth, 29 in.



DESK, FRENCH, PERIOD OF LOUIS XVI
FRONT, OPEN



DESK, FRENCH, PERIOD OF LOUIS XVI
BACK, OPEN

big key is entered, it is necessary to make a half turn to the left, push in the key entirely, and then make eight complete turns from right to left. The key is then pulled out half-way and pressed toward the right, while, at the same time, the sliding cover of the desk is raised.

The desk chair, upholstered with leather, may now be pulled out from the front of the desk, of which, when closed, it forms an integral part. The leather-covered tablet is then drawn out. At the back are three compartments with sliding covers. The central part may be opened up so as to form a sloping pulpit or desk. When this is raised, access is had to three sliding boxes and a large hiding place. The inner drawers, concealed when the desk is shut, open by pressure on springs. Two narrow drawers, faced with mirrors, on either side of the central compartment, may be pulled out without further ado. An interesting feature of the compartment, which is closed by two small doors, is that the back panel may be slid to one side so as to provide an opening through which the user of the desk might communicate with the secretary, for whom, as we shall see, facilities were provided on the back of the desk. At each end of the desk is a slide. The top of the desk is covered with a marble slab surrounded by a light gallery of gilt bronze.

Coming now to the back of the desk, we find that the upper part, composed of three panels, forms one leaf which opens downward when unlocked, revealing a series of shallow drawers and shelves. This lid is covered with leather, and serves as a desk; a central part opens to form a pulpit. When the lid is let down, it is supported by a section of the desk, which is pulled out in the same way as the chair on the front of the desk. This, in turn, has several drawers, and the top may be raised so as to form a pulpit, if the section is drawn out while the lid is closed.

From the purely artistic side, the interest

of the desk lies in the attractiveness of its severe but beautiful forms, and in the skilful use of ornament in gilt bronze to emphasize constructional lines and to relieve the simplicity of the form of the desk by the exquisite detailed work of the various garlands, rosettes, and mouldings. The metal mounts, delightful works of art in themselves, contribute largely through their decorative value to the effectiveness of the desk. In the period of Louis XVI, furniture design and construction reached a height of perfection which has rarely, if ever, been surpassed. Of this beautiful furniture, the Museum desk is beyond doubt a notable example.

It is regrettable that we do not know the name of the maker of this desk. In this brief account, it would be rash to hazard a definite ascription to any one of the many master cabinet-makers who flourished in the reign of Louis XVI. It may be remarked, however, that the style of the desk reminds one of the work of Guillaume Beneman. Typical of this artist is his choice of massive forms, the severity of which is enhanced by the elaborate delicacy of the metal mounts. These characteristics we find in our new accession. Beneman, who executed many fine pieces of furniture for the royal residences, was received into the corporation of the *maitres-ébénistes* of Paris in 1785. The date of his death is unknown, but he was still working in 1802. The Museum desk may be dated fairly late in the period of Louis XVI, perhaps about 1785-90. Beneman's work may seem a little ponderous, when compared with the fragile productions of certain of his contemporaries, but through justness of proportions, skilful use of ornament, and the beauty of the forms themselves, Beneman does achieve a magnificent effect which permits him to be classed among the leading cabinet-makers of the period. Whether his or not, the desk is an imposing example of the most elaborate French furniture. J. B.